United Nations S/2011/119

Security Council

Distr.: General
9 March 2011

Original: English

Sixth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1886 (2009) and 1941 (2010), in which the Council requested me to submit a report on the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) every six months. The report covers the period from 1 September 2010 to 28 February 2011.

II. Major developments

2. Since my last report dated 17 September 2010 (S/2010/471), important developments have taken place in Sierra Leone, and in its neighbouring country, Guinea, which will have a positive impact on Sierra Leone's continuing progress in consolidating peace and achieving its development goals. As part of the preparations for the 2012 presidential, parliamentary and local council elections in Sierra Leone, agreement was reached between the electoral management bodies, the Government of Sierra Leone, its donor partners and the United Nations, on the cost and related arrangements for the elections. As an important step towards enhancing national unity and cohesion, President Ernest Bai Koroma appointed new ministers during his recent Cabinet reshuffle, which diversified representation within his administration. In an effort to address concerns surrounding recently concluded mining contracts, the Government took measures to improve the governance of the sector and reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring greater transparency. The free health-care initiative launched by President Koroma in April 2010 has begun to show encouraging results, especially in reducing child and maternal mortality.

A. Political developments

3. In his address to the nation on 17 September 2010, marking the third anniversary of the inauguration of his Government, President Koroma outlined the achievements of his administration, including improvements in electricity generation and the provision of free health care for pregnant and lactating mothers and children under the age of five. The President invited all Sierra Leoneans to contribute to the transformation of the country. On 8 October 2010, President

Please recycle

Koroma addressed the fourth session of Parliament, underscoring the important progress the country has made and the achievements in the implementation of the Government's Agenda for Change. President Koroma also stressed the commitment of his Government to review all mining agreements without exception. In that respect, he sought the support of Sierra Leone's bilateral and multilateral partners in ongoing negotiations to build the capacity of the Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources to monitor agreements with the aim of ensuring compliance and maximizing benefits from the country's mineral resources.

4. On 4 December 2010, President Koroma announced a Cabinet reshuffle. Among the newly appointed ministers are two members of the major opposition party, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), who hold the positions of Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and Deputy Minister of Health and Sanitation. However, SLPP suspended both appointees from the party, indicating the mistrust that exists between SLPP and the ruling All Peoples Congress (APC) party. The party stated that it had no intention of forming a coalition government with the ruling party and was not consulted prior to the appointments. Notwithstanding those objections, the appointments were approved by Parliament in a bipartisan vote.

5. New Ministers of Justice, Mines and Minerals and Internal Affairs were also appointed. The new Cabinet has two female ministers and four female deputy ministers. In an attempt to ensure a regionally balanced government that includes representatives from all parts of the country, a number of key ministerial appointees are from the south and eastern regions of the country, the political strongholds of the opposition SLPP. However, these appointments were viewed by SLPP as a calculated move by the ruling party to win votes in its political strongholds in the 2012 elections.

6. On 11 December 2010, a local council by-election was held in Kono District, and the candidate of APC emerged victorious. Given the political importance of the district in deciding the outcome of the 2012 presidential elections, the two major political parties, APC and SLPP, keenly contested the local council election. The election was preceded by incidents of political violence and intolerance. Between 11 and 13 November 2010, in anticipation of a gathering of SLPP party members, the offices of the party in Koidu City, as well as buildings associated with officials of the ruling APC were vandalized. Also, some senior SLPP officials, including two presidential aspirants and the deputy minority leader of Parliament, sustained injuries as a result of attacks allegedly carried out by youth sympathetic to the ruling APC party. In protest, the SLPP parliamentarians boycotted parliamentary proceedings, including debates on the 2011 budget. In its report on the incident, the Political Parties Registration Commission stated that it could not obtain any prima facie evidence as to whether the violent attack on the SLPP delegates was prompted or otherwise encouraged by the leadership or supporters of any party or movement. The Commission urged the Sierra Leone police to further investigate the attack on the SLPP officials and bring the perpetrators to justice.

7. In view of these difficulties, which could undermine ongoing efforts to ensure peaceful and credible elections in 2012 if not addressed, my Executive Representative engaged the parties and various national stakeholders, including the Political Parties Registration Commission, the National Electoral Commission, the leadership of the police and the diplomatic community in Freetown, to underscore the need for political parties to control their supporters and abide by the code of

conduct for political parties. With the support of UNIPSIL, both the Political Parties Registration Commission and the National Electoral Commission established a strong presence in the district during the elections and closely monitored developments.

Implementation of the joint communiqué of 2 April 2009

8. Despite the challenges mentioned above, the implementation of the joint communiqué continued during the reporting period. At a national delegates' conference held on 3 December 2010 in Makeni, in the northern region, the youth wings of SLPP, APC, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC), with technical and financial support from UNIPSIL and the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, established the All Political Parties Youth Association. The goal of the Association is to prevent political violence among youths and to foster greater cooperation among youths with diverse political backgrounds. Youths from the Association have played important roles in promoting non-violence in several by-elections and are likely to do so during the 2012 elections. In his address to the delegates' conference in Makeni, President Koroma assured the Association of his full support.

9. As part of the efforts to ensure the implementation of the joint communiqué, especially those aspects relating to securing the commitment of Sierra Leone's political parties to enhance the political participation of women (30 per cent quota for women in elected positions), UNIPSIL facilitated a series of dialogue sessions among women wings of SLPP, APC, PMDC and NDA. Following those consultations, the women leaders of the four major political parties established the All Political Parties Women's Association on 13 January 2011. In addition to promoting gender equality and women's political participation, the Association will serve as a forum for inter-party dialogue and conflict prevention.

10. Notwithstanding these important achievements in the implementation of the joint communiqué, further progress on some provisions, including on the establishment of an independent police complaints committee, needs to be made. The Government also has yet to release its long overdue white paper on the report and recommendations of a bipartisan panel established pursuant to the 2 April joint communiqué to investigate the causes and circumstances surrounding the political disturbances that occurred in March 2009.

Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation

11. In accordance with the provisions of the 2 April joint communiqué, the ruling APC and the major opposition party, SLPP, agreed to relinquish control of their radio stations and to work together to establish an independent public broadcasting corporation that would give equal voice to all shades of opinion. During the reporting period, the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) made steady progress in providing unbiased coverage and fair access to all political parties, including granting television air time to presidential candidates of SLPP. It also played a critical role in facilitating dialogue and reducing tensions among political parties in Kono during the local council by-election held in December 2010.

12. UNIPSIL, in close collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), continued to provide technical and capacity-building support to SLBC. New corporate structures and administrative procedures, including human

resource and financial manuals, were put in place. UNIPSIL also assisted SLBC with recruitment and strategic planning and with carrying out a country-wide technical survey of its transmission facilities. SLBC received further assistance in the amount of $792,000 from the United Nations "Delivering as One" fund, to support its procurement and other activities. Additional support will be provided through the Peacebuilding Fund in 2011. However, ensuring long-term financial sustainability and independence of SLBC remains a critical issue that needs to be addressed. UNIPSIL will continue to work with SLBC, the Government and other partners to achieve that goal. Efforts will be made in 2011 to strengthen SLBC editorial and coverage policies, particularly in the light of the 2012 elections.

Arrangements for the 2012 elections

13. During the reporting period, progress was made in finalizing the United Nations electoral support programme to be managed by UNDP, with contributions from the Governments of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ireland and Japan, as well as the European Commission and the United Nations. The programme was approved at a meeting jointly chaired by the Minister for Finance and Economic Development and by my Executive Representative on 3 February 2011. It will concentrate on enhancing the institutional management capacity of the National Electoral Commission, including among others, improving electoral administration, voter registration, legal reform and electoral dispute resolution. The programme also aims to strengthen conflict management and electoral security through support provided to electoral offences courts, the Sierra Leone police and the Office of National Security.

14. A key factor in ensuring the success of the elections is to strengthen the capacities of non-State actors to enable them to play a meaningful role in achieving peaceful, credible and democratic elections. To that end, and with support from the Peacebuilding Fund, UNIPSIL will assist important non-State actors, such as political parties, youth and women groups, interfaith institutions, traditional authorities, the media and the country's artists and musicians. The envisaged assistance in the long-term would enhance the capacity of non-State national actors and institutions in the areas of conflict prevention, mediation and resolution. It will also help establish important confidence-building mechanisms, particularly at the chiefdom and district levels, which are crucial for the success of the elections.

B. Security developments

15. The security situation in the country remained stable during the reporting period. The Government efforts to enhance the capacity of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces were supplemented with assistance from its international partners. The Government of the United Kingdom provided an advanced infantry skills course to 36 officers and senior non-commissioned officers of the Armed Forces. Also with the assistance of the United States Government, the Armed Forces successfully destroyed 24,000 pieces of explosives and weapons in a month-long operation.

16. A joint training programme for members of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, and the Sierra Leone police was concluded during the reporting period. The programme, in which 6,247 personnel from security agencies

participated, was aimed at improving communication and collaboration among security sector personnel and at addressing occasional clashes among members of the Armed Forces and the police. The joint training was funded by the Peacebuilding Fund and facilitated by UNIPSIL.

C. Economic and social developments

17. On 12 November 2010, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development presented the Government's 2011 budget to Parliament. In his speech, the Minister noted that economic growth was estimated to be 4.5 per cent in 2010 and 5.5 to 6 per cent in 2011. The local currency, the Leone (SLL), fell sharply against the United States dollar in 2010 and it continues to fall in early 2011. Exports increased, particularly diamond and agricultural products, while imports rose sharply owing to investments in the mining sector. The cost of living and the price of essential commodities, including food items, rose and inflation remained high at around 16 per cent, although it is expected to return to a single digit by late 2011. The Government expressed concern at the increase in prices of essential commodities and stated that trade monitors will investigate the causes of the increase.

18. Government domestic revenues also increased in 2010, primarily as a result of the Goods and Services Tax, and is estimated to reach 13.2 per cent of the gross domestic product, when compared to 11.6 per cent in 2009. The rise in domestic revenues helped finance an increase in the budget, with expenditures rising to 1.9 trillion Leone in 2010.

19. Rising estimates of iron ore deposits and the prospects of oil production are providing indications of a significant change in the structure and size of the Sierra Leone economy in the medium term. Furthermore, with the conclusion of major agreements on iron ore production, commercial agriculture and agri-business, there was increased economic activity in the latter part of 2010.

20. Additionally, during the period under review, the Government of Sierra Leone began renegotiating the mining agreement with London Minerals to rectify earlier weaknesses identified in the agreement. It also finalized renegotiation of a mining agreement with Koidu Holdings. Donors, including the United Nations, have increasingly engaged the Government in a policy dialogue and offered technical assistance for Sierra Leone's extractive industries.

21. A development partners' committee meeting was held during the reporting period, the first since the London consultative conference of November 2010. It was jointly chaired by President Koroma, my Executive Representative and the World Bank. The aim of the meeting was to ensure coordination of overseas development assistance and adherence to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. My Executive Representative welcomed the Government efforts aimed at reducing aid dependency through partnership with the private sector, particularly in the mineral sector, as well as the importance of strengthening institutions that will drive the economy.

22. On 28 October 2010, Parliament ratified the Public Private Partnership Act of 2010. The Act provides a legal framework for the private sector to design, build and administer major infrastructural development programmes and is expected to attract more foreign investment.

23. The Government continued its free health-care programme for pregnant and lactating women, as well as children under the age of five. While a full assessment of the programme has yet to be carried out, there are early positive indications of an increase in the number of children under five receiving treatment for malaria; reductions in the malaria fatality rate in hospitals and increases in the utilization of health-care services and antenatal consultations.

III. Main risks to peace consolidation

A. Youth

24. Youth unemployment remains a significant challenge to the peace consolidation process. During the reporting period, there were clashes between youths and police in Tonkolili and Kono Districts related in part to unemployment issues.

25. To address these problems, and following the 4 December 2010 Cabinet reshuffle, a new Ministry of Youth Employment and Sports was established. Efforts are also under way to put in place operational arrangements for the National Youth Commission. Board members have been selected and the position of Commissioner has been advertised. However, the relationship between the Ministry and the National Youth Commission, as well as the Ministry of Labour, needs to be clarified further.

26. An impact assessment of youth employment projects, funded by the Peacebuilding Fund and other international partners, and implemented by UNDP, reported some encouraging results. On average, the projects have increased the income of youths by over 200 per cent and enabled them to enjoy increased social status and a sense of well-being. International development partners involved with youth and employment, namely the World Bank, the European Union, the German Development Cooperation, the United Nations and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, have formed a core group to provide coherent support to the Government.

27. UNIPSIL provided support for organizing a regional seminar on youth employment, sponsored by the Government of Austria and the Peacebuilding Support Office. The seminar contributed to advancing the work of the Peacebuilding Commission in promoting youth employment and offered an opportunity to share experiences and lessons on the way forward.

B. Corruption

28. On 26 October 2010, Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index for 2010 revealed that the ranking of Sierra Leone rose to 134 from 146 out of 178 countries. Correspondingly, efforts to tackle corruption continued during the reporting period. Charges were filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission against a number of public functionaries, including the suspended Commissioner-General of the National Revenue Authority and the Executive Director of the Sierra Leone Maritime Administration. The Commission continued investigating corruption allegations in other Government entities, such as the Freetown City Council. On

25 January 2011, it completed its investigation into the case of the alleged misappropriation of public funds in the National Social Security and Insurance Trust, with demands that four high-ranking officials, including the Trust's former Director-General and current Financial Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, pay back a sum of Le 2 billion. However, the major opposition party, SLPP, has criticized the Anti-Corruption Commission decision and argued that the four individuals should be prosecuted.

29. The trial of the former Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources was concluded during the period under review. The ex-minister was found guilty on several counts and received a three-year prison sentence or alternatively, a cumulative fine of over $120,000, which was subsequently paid. On 30 September 2010, following a public notice issued by the Commission, the High Court in Freetown ordered six ministers and some parliamentarians to declare their assets.

C. Illicit drug trafficking and organized crime

30. Efforts are ongoing to implement the West Africa Coast Initiative. The Initiative supports the ECOWAS regional action plan to address the growing problem of illicit drug trafficking, organized crime and drug abuse in West Africa. UNIPSIL provided assistance for the establishment of a Transnational Organized Crime Unit in Sierra Leone. The Unit, the first of its kind in the West Africa subregion, has been successful in coordinating activities of the various national security agencies to combat illicit drug trafficking. Cocaine seizures in Sierra Leone at the end of 2010 were estimated at 142.4 kilograms, with a street value of approximately $8.5 million in Europe. A memorandum of understanding was signed between the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Office for Project Services on 3 December 2010, which will enable approximately $1.4 million from the Government of the Netherlands to be channelled to the Transnational Organized Crime Unit in 2011 for law enforcement operations. Also during the reporting period, the United States Government committed about $1 million to the Unit for the fiscal year 2010/11.

IV. Support to democratic institutions

A. National Electoral Commission

31. In addition to the Kono by-elections, the National Electoral Commission organized by-elections in Kambia and Tonkolili Districts. Both were conducted peacefully and candidates from the ruling APC party won. Under the auspices of its Political Parties Liaison Committee, the National Electoral Commission continued to convene regular meetings of political parties to interact and inform them of its activities. However, the Commission's relationship with the major opposition party remains strained, and continued dialogue and collaboration between it and political parties remain critical to resolve outstanding issues and ensure the credibility of the elections. To that end, the United Nations will continue to facilitate dialogue between the National Electoral Commission and the political parties. Through the election basket fund, the United Nations will also support specific elements of the National Electoral Commission strategic plan to complement the efforts of the

Government. The basket fund will also provide support to the voter registration process, reform of the electoral laws, organization of all planned elections and limited support to equip the regional and district offices.

B. Political Parties Registration Commission

32. In keeping with its mandate, PPRC looked into the circumstances surrounding the political disturbances in Kono that preceded the local council election held in the district in December 2010. It called on the political parties to adhere to the code of conduct for political parties, and urged the Sierra Leone police to further investigate the attack on the SLPP delegation and bring the perpetrators to justice. It also called on the political parties to submit their financial statements, as stipulated under the Political Parties Act of 2002. On 2 November 2010, at a stakeholders' meeting opened by Vice-President Sam Sumana, PPRC presented its strategic plan for the period 2010-2013. The plan contains priority areas, such as capacity-building for PPRC, the political parties and their youth and women's wings. Given the major role of PPRC in promoting political tolerance and non-violence in the 2012 elections, it will receive financial and technical support from the election basket fund. At the same time, it is important for the Government to formally announce the appointment of a Chair and members of the Commission, especially for those whose terms expired in January 2011.

C. Independent Media Commission

33. During the reporting period, UNIPSIL collaborated with the Independent Media Commission to establish an Editors' Guild for mainstream newspapers in Sierra Leone. The Guild will serve as a consultative forum for media houses on management issues, ethics, access to finance, fund-raising and capacity-building. In view of the important role of the media in ensuring peaceful elections in 2012, UNDP, with funding from the Canadian International Development Agency, assisted the Commission in establishing two regional offices in the east and northern provinces of the country to strengthen the role of monitoring the media. Further support will be given to the Commission from the UNDP-managed election basket fund to facilitate its activities. In addition, UNIPSIL will work with the Commission to support the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists in efforts to nurture a culture of responsible journalism.

D. Decentralization and devolution

34. On 9 February 2011, Vice-President Sam Sumana launched a new national decentralization policy. The overall aim of the policy is to improve the decentralization and devolution process. At the launch, the Minister for Finance and Economic Development enumerated achievements made, including increased financial allocation to local councils. He noted capacity constraints, such as the lack of skilled staff in the local councils. Though only 46 of 80 functions have thus far been devolved, the Government plans to conclude the process in 2012.

V. Human rights

A. National human rights commission/human rights and rule of law

35. The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone continued to implement its mandate in monitoring and advancing respect for human rights in the country. It organized forums on its 2009 state of human rights report. In collaboration with UNIPSIL and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Commission held a national consultative workshop in September 2010 to coordinate civil society inputs to the universal periodic review process for Sierra Leone. During the reporting period, UNIPSIL and the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone also arranged a national consultative conference for persons with disabilities, which highlighted the need for their integration and empowerment.

36. In spite of the progress made in the advancement of human rights, the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone continues to encounter funding and logistical difficulties. A memorandum of understanding is being prepared between UNIPSIL and the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone to provide technical support for establishing a human rights monitoring directorate in the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone. The Peacebuilding Fund also approved a grant of $200,000 to strengthen the outreach capacity of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone.

37. In December 2010, UNIPSIL trained 80 members of the Transnational Organized Crime Unit of the Sierra Leone police and other security agencies on issues related to human rights and human trafficking. Training sessions on sexual and gender-based violence, human rights monitoring and administration of justice were facilitated for personnel of the Police Family Support Unit, district human rights committees, local court staff and other civil society organizations.

B. Implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

38. On 12 and 13 October 2010, the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone, in collaboration with UNIPSIL, organized the second national consultative conference on the status of implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. While noting the progress made in some areas, the conference underscored the need to implement the remaining recommendations, such as the separation of the offices of the Attorney-General and the Minister of Justice, the decriminalization of libel, a constitutional review, and the abolition of the death penalty and the repeal of discriminatory provisions against women.

39. The Sierra Leone reparations programme conducted symbolic community reparation events and delivered partial benefits to 20,000 of the 32,000 registered victims. The National Trust Fund for Victims will receive financial assistance from the "Delivering as One" fund, the Peacebuilding Fund and the German Government. Nonetheless, further assistance to victims will be necessary.

VI. Gender issues

40. In accordance with the mandate of the Mission related to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), UNIPSIL and the United Nations county team continued to provide support to the Government in the implementation of its national action plan. During the reporting period, encouraging progress was made towards addressing issues affecting the rights and well-being of women and girls in Sierra Leone. The Government's free health initiative targeting pregnant and lactating mothers is showing results in reducing maternal mortality. Efforts to ensure greater political participation of women have gained momentum with the commitment made by President Koroma and the establishment, with the support of UNIPSIL, of the All Political Parties Women Wings Association to advance the participation of women in the political process, especially the attainment of a 30 per cent quota for women in elected positions.

41. More efforts were made to eliminate gender-based violence and reduce the practice of female genital mutilation with an innovative approach aimed at securing the support and participation of national stakeholders. To that end, UNIPSIL initiated national consultations with 266 traditional women leaders, known as *Soweis*. The aim of the dialogue was to find ways of working together to eliminate gender-based violence and reduce the high prevalence of female genital mutilation.

42. Furthermore, my Executive Representative, with support from the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, also held innovative meetings with the *Soweis*, with a view to bridging the gap that exists between the United Nations and this women's group on the female genital mutilation issue and to promoting the rights of women and girls in a culturally sensitive environment. The discussions also focused on the need to identify alternative means of livelihood for *Soweis*.

43. UNIPSIL further developed a gender module and trained 48 security personnel, who later served as trainers for 6,427 security sector personnel. This training also emphasized the inclusion of female officers in the security institutions at decision-making levels.

VII. Sustaining peacebuilding

44. Sustaining the activities of UNIPSIL and the United Nations system as a whole in support of Sierra Leone's peacebuilding process depends on the full implementation of the Joint Vision for Sierra Leone of the United Nations Family. On 28 and 29 October 2010, my Executive Representative led the annual retreat of the United Nations country team in Sierra Leone, during which the country team reaffirmed its commitment to the Joint Vision; renewed its support to the implementation of the Government's Agenda for Change; and reiterated its commitment to promote the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The challenges that the 2012 elections will pose were acknowledged, and the United Nations family pledged to continue to work together in an integrated manner to assist the country in conducting peaceful, credible and transparent elections.

45. The retreat noted that the cost of delivering the Joint Vision for the period 2009-2010 was $360 million, but the funding gap at the end of 2010 was $151 million. Securing funding for the Sierra Leone multi-donor trust fund has

remained difficult, despite recent contributions from the Governments of Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia.

46. In January 2011, a second envelope of $7 million was allocated for Sierra Leone from the Peacebuilding Fund, which will be used to support five Joint Vision programmes, namely on supporting efforts to create conditions for peaceful elections, access to justice and human rights, reparations for war victims, gender equity and women's rights, and support to Sierra Leone's democratic institutions.

47. In accordance with its mandate, the Peacebuilding Commission continued to support the work of UNIPSIL in Sierra Leone, particularly in the areas of good governance and the rule of law, youth employment and in the fight against drug trafficking. At the end of November 2010, the Peacebuilding Commission Chair of the country-specific configuration for Sierra Leone, Ambassador John McNee (Canada), visited Freetown. During his visit, he met with senior Government officials, the diplomatic corps, major political parties, the United Nations country team, civil society and other relevant stakeholders. He was updated on recent progress, existing challenges and threats to peace consolidation. Regarding the 2012 elections, the Chair strongly emphasized the importance of open dialogue and building trust between the parties and national electoral institutions. He also reviewed the progress made in the implementation of the Agenda for Change.

VIII. Special Court

A. Trial of Charles Taylor

48. The trial brought before the Special Court concerning the former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, concluded its evidentiary phase on 12 November 2010. The defence has called on a total of 21 witnesses, including Mr. Taylor, since the opening of the case in July 2009. The critical milestone of completing the defence case has allowed the Court to downsize a significant number of staff. Closing arguments were scheduled from 8 to 11 February 2011, and the Trial Chamber is expected to deliver a judgment on the merits within six months. If applicable, a sentencing judgment will require an additional six to eight weeks and may be followed by appeals proceedings.

B. Funding

49. The Special Court continued to face funding issues and received a subvention of $9,882,594 from the United Nations, following a request made to the Secretary-General that was subsequently approved by the General Assembly.

C. Residual Special Court

50. The Special Court is ensuring a smooth transition to the Residual Special Court upon the completion of judicial proceedings. In December 2010, the original set of Court records was transferred to the Netherlands to be housed in the Dutch national archives. A public copy remains in Sierra Leone, in accordance with the

Agreement on the Residual Special Court. The completion of the majority of the Court's archival work also allowed for the additional downsizing of staff.

51. Also in the light of the transfer of the archives and the significant downsizing of Court staff, a decision was taken to withdraw the Mongolian Guard Force from the Special Court. Planning for the future use of the Court's site is under way between the Special Court and the Government of Sierra Leone. A grant from the Peacebuilding Fund was approved in December 2010 to establish a peace museum in honour of the memory of civil war victims. The museum will inform the public on the civil war and provide access to the Court's jurisprudence.

IX. Regional cooperation

52. Sierra Leone continued to collaborate closely with regional organizations, particularly the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Mano River Union. President Koroma was nominated by ECOWAS to head a delegation to assist in resolving the political impasse in Côte d'Ivoire. He was part of a delegation that visited Laurent Gbagbo and President-elect Alassane Ouattara, to convey the position of ECOWAS. On 26 and 27 January 2011, President Koroma led an ECOWAS delegation to Washington, D.C. to discuss the situation in Côte d'Ivoire. At an extraordinary meeting of the Mano River Union Joint Security and Peace Committee, Sierra Leone pledged to support all ECOWAS and African Union resolutions concerning Côte d'Ivoire. Also, the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces Chief of Defence Staff, Major-General Robert Yirah Koroma, reiterated Sierra Leone's commitment to provide support to ECOWAS under its stand-by force arrangements.

53. In the context of subregional stability, Sierra Leone's relationship with its neighbours, including Guinea, remained cordial, and the Sierra Leone Government indicated that it will again seek resolution of the Yenga border dispute with the newly elected Guinean Government.

X. Progress in the integration process

54. During the reporting period, UNIPSIL continued to exert efforts at meeting its benchmarks, including exploring possibilities and scenarios of the transition of UNIPSIL activities to the United Nations country team. I intend to report on progress achieved towards this end in more detail upon further consultation with the Government and other partners.

55. In order to promote the programmatic integration of the four United Nations joint field offices, my Executive Representative, with the backing of the United Nations country team, appointed regional coordinators for the field offices. These appointments build on the administrative merger of the field offices in 2010. However, owing to funding constraints and a reorganization of the United Nations country team, only the existing four integrated field offices will be maintained, instead of eight, as earlier envisaged.

XI. Observations and recommendations

56. I am encouraged that, during the reporting period, Sierra Leone continued to progress in advancing good governance and promoting socio-economic development, as outlined in the Government's Agenda for Change. Overall, while some challenges remain, these welcome developments could provide the grounds for continuing to plan the UNIPSIL exit strategy.

57. Among the three risk areas — youth unemployment, corruption and illegal narcotics — identified in the Agenda for Change, overcoming youth unemployment remains an intractable problem that will require greater commitment on the part of the Government and support from its international partners. Ongoing efforts of the Anti-Corruption Commission to combat corruption are welcome and have contributed to enhancing good governance, building confidence among key national actors and improving the international standing and image of the country. I encourage the Government to sustain the momentum in addressing corruption, and I further call on Sierra Leone's international partners to continue their vital support for the Anti-Corruption Commission. With respect to illegal drugs, the establishment of the Transnational Organized Crime Unit, with strong international collaboration, has made substantial contributions in stemming the flow of illegal narcotics into the country, since the July 2008 seizure of over 700 kilograms of cocaine at Lungi International Airport.

58. I welcome the Government's free health-care programme for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under the age of five, which is beginning to show very encouraging results, as already seen in the substantial reduction of infant and maternal mortality. I call on Sierra Leone's international partners to work with the Government in reversing the challenge of maternal and infant mortality in the country and thus enabling Sierra Leone to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, especially goals 4 and 5.

59. I applaud the commitments of the Government to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the steps taken towards attaining gender parity. Clearly, more needs to be done. Ongoing efforts towards ensuring greater political participation of women, including through the formation of an All Political Parties Women's Association, and achieving consensus among the country's main political parties, are very welcome developments. I also note the unique efforts being made by UNIPSIL and the United Nations country team to help eliminate violence and harmful practices affecting women and girls in Sierra Leone, including female genital mutilation, through engagements with the Government, traditional women leaders and those directly affected by the practice.

60. I commend the efforts of President Koroma to deepen national cohesion and unity through an inclusive cabinet representing all parts of the country. I also commend him for his commitment to review all mining agreements to ensure greater transparency in the governance and management of the country's vital minerals sector.

61. The by-election in Kono district on 5 December 2010 was a test for the country's democratic institutions ahead of the 2012 elections. The manner in which the national institutions of Sierra Leone discharged their duties in providing security, assuring the credibility of the electoral process and making available forums for mediation and dialogue, is a positive indication of the continuing

maturity of these institutions. In particular, the professional role played by the Sierra Leone police is commendable. I call on the Government and its international partners to continue their laudable efforts in strengthening these institutions, especially in addressing the current transport constraints of the Sierra Leone police.

62. All of these achievements will be put to a test by the challenges of conducting peaceful, free and fair elections in 2012. In that regard, the United Nations and its international partners stand ready to assist Sierra Leone and its electoral institutions. However, the Government and the country's political parties have a critical role to play in ensuring the success of the elections. The success of the elections requires a level playing field; political access by the contestants to all regions of the country; a credible electoral process; and willingness of the contestants to accept the outcome of the process. I, therefore, urge the political parties to continue to adhere to the 2 April Joint Communiqué and the Code of Conduct of Political Parties, as well as to respect the roles and responsibilities of democratic institutions in the conduct of the elections. I also encourage the Government to appoint a Chair and members of the Political Parties Registration Commission.

63. I commend the work of the Peacebuilding Commission in Sierra Leone and particularly the efforts of the Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration, which have succeeded in sustaining international attention on the peacebuilding needs of Sierra Leone. The Commission's engagement over the next 18 months will be critical to accompany Sierra Leone through a credible and peaceful electoral process in 2012. The progress made thus far in Sierra Leone deserves further support from the country's international partners, and I count on their unwavering assistance to cement its achievements.

64. In conclusion, I wish to express sincere appreciation to my Executive Representative, Michael von der Schulenburg, the staff of UNIPSIL and the United Nations country team, as well as to the World Bank, the African Development Bank and Sierra Leone's partners, for their unrelenting efforts to further promote the peace consolidation process in Sierra Leone. Finally, I thank President Koroma and the Government for their strong cooperation with the United Nations, which greatly facilitated the work of the mission.